

HOMILY 18TH APRIL 2021 RESPONDING TO CHRIST TODAY
READING:LUKE 24 26-48

In terms of COVID 19, it is no exaggeration to say that we continue to live in uncertain and unknown times. We wonder what is going to happen next.

Our reading for this service tells us that something similar was happening to some of Jesus' closest followers on the evening of the first Easter Day.

They had witnessed or had heard of Jesus' violent death on Good Friday and so they too must have been wondering what was going to happen next. Initially, perhaps they felt that all they could do was to meet in silence and in secret.

But they must have known that Jesus had said that he would rise from the dead and they did learn of reports which said that this is exactly what had happened. One such report was 'It is true, the Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon'. But I am sure that they still had their doubts.

They needed far more reassurance that Good Friday was not the end of all that Jesus said and did and of the Kingdom be brought into what we call 'time'.

This response should not really surprise us because Luke's detailed Gospel tells us that often the disciples had fumbling thoughts as to who Jesus really was. If we had been some of the early followers of Christ, what would we have thought about the claim that people had seen Jesus risen from the dead?

The Risen Christ must have known that his closest followers needed a lot more convincing that he had risen from the dead as he said he would do. And so our reading tells us that this is exactly what happens. To help prove all this, Jesus eats some fish and then gives his followers instructions as to how his story is to move on. And we know from the Acts of Apostles (Luke's sequel to his Gospel) that this is what happened.

It is a theme of Luke's Gospel that the message and Kingdom that Christ brought into what we call 'time' only really comes to life when people positively respond to it and this happens in our Reading.

But perhaps the best example of this is in Luke 24:12-32 when Cleopas and another disciple meet the Risen Jesus on the first Easter Day whilst the two followers are travelling from Jerusalem to Emmaus. You will need to read this story for yourself to see how in the end the two followers do positively respond to Risen Christ and then what this encounter can teach us.

So how can we make our faith journey speak into our present times so that people can positively respond to it?

Here are some words from New Zealand for us to ponder. They help to define the identity of our faith journey in our fearful and uncertain times.

*How blest are those who abhor easy pieties; the kingdom of heaven is
theirs*

*How blest are those who train in non-violence; they shall have the earth
for their possession*

*How blest are those who fast for justice; they shall be satisfied
How blest are those who see enemies as human; mercy shall be shown
to them*

*How blest are those who live what they profess; they shall see God
How blest are those who build bridges of reconciliation; God shall call
them his friends*

*How blest are those who show the outcast that someone understands;
the kingdom of heaven is theirs.*

These are challenging words but they are targets we have to continually aim for.

Or you may prefer these words of St Columban (543-615) to meditate on:

Let Christ paint his image in us

Pope Francis visited the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem and said 'Building peace is difficult- but living without peace is a constant torment.'

In our tasks of today of responding to Christ and so advancing the Kingdom of God, perhaps we can adapt Pope Francis' words as follows:

*Building the Kingdom of God is difficult- but living without the Kingdom
of God is a constant torment.*

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